United Nations A/HRC/32/G/23

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 July 2016

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Thirty-second session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 1 July 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to provide herewith the comments of the Government of Greece on the written statement submitted by the "Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/32/NGO/74), submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-second session under agenda item 3 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 3.

* Circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

GE.16-12666(E)
1612666

Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 1 July 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Submission by the Permanent Mission of Greece, on the Muslim Minority in Thrace and Freedom of Association, HRC 32, 1 July 2016

Greece attaches great importance to implementing coherent, comprehensive, and effective policies that guarantee, inter alia, equality before the law, respect for human rights religious freedoms and equality of opportunities for all. The same principles and goals apply with reference to the protection of and full respect for the rights of Greek citizens members of the Muslim minority in Thrace. With regard to question of "ethnic self-identification" of the minority, we recall our standing position on the free individual self-identification. Moreover, the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne established the status of the Muslim minority in Thrace/ Greece identifying it on the basis of the only common denominator i.e the Muslim faith of the three -otherwise distinct- groups (Greek citizens of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin) that comprise it. Each of these groups has its own language and cultural traditions/heritage.

With regard to the link between self-identification and the freedom of assembly and association, we would like to underline that over 50 associations which are active among minority members, have been legally registered by the relevant Courts since 2008. The Greek Justice fully complies with the acquis of the European Convention on Human Rights and other international instruments, under the rule of law.

With regard to the references of the shutdown of two "minority associations' annexes" in Komotini, we stress that there were not "annexes", but informal kindergartens, which were operating illegally, housing activities for children of preschool age, with the cover of the activities of that specific minority association and under its auspices. The operation of those kindergartens, which had not applied for a legal permission from the competent authorities, on the one hand goes against the principle of legality. On the other hand, it has put at risk the physical integrity of the children, since there were no guarantees for the rules of establishment, operation and implementation of all appropriate security measures. Although the objective of the Court's decision has been the implementation of the Law and the provision of the appropriate operation measures, the NGO so-called "Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe" attempts to present this issue as a violation of minority rights, thus distorting the true facts.

We would also like to highlight that according to the journalist Mr. Dede, correspondent of the minority newspaper "Trakyanin Sesi", those annexes "were justifiably shut down since there was no official permission".